UNITED NATIONS

A

General Assembly

Distr.
GENERAL

A/AC.109/1120
24 July 1992

ORIGINAL: ENGLISH

SPECIAL COMMITTEE ON THE SITUATION WITH REGARD TO THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE DECLARATION ON THE GRANTING OF INDEPENDENCE TO COLONIAL COUNTRIES AND PEOPLES

NEW CALEDONIA

Working paper prepared by the Secretariat

CONTENTS

		Paragraphs	Page
I.	GENERAL	1 - 8	3
II.	POLITICAL DEVELOPMENTS		
	Meeting of the Committee to Monitor the Matignon Agreement	9 - 15	4
III.	ECONOMIC CONDITIONS	16 - 40	5
	A. General	16 - 19	5
	B. Trade	20 - 22	6
	C. Public finance	23	7
	D. Agriculture, land tenure and livestock	24 - 27	7
	E. Fisheries	28 - 30	8
	F. Mining	31 - 34	8
	G. Transport and communications	35 - 37	9

92-30913 3465d (E) 280792

280792

/...

CONTENTS (continued)

		Paragraphs	Page
	H. Tourism	38 - 40	9
IV.	SOCIAL AND EDUCATIONAL CONDITIONS	41 - 49	10
	A. Labour	41 - 44	10
	B. Public health	45	11
	C. Educational conditions	46 - 49	11

I. GENERAL

1. New Caledonia is located in the Pacific Ocean, about 1,500 kilometres east of Australia and 1,700 kilometres north of New Zealand. It comprises one large island, known as Grande Terre, and several smaller islands. To the east of Grande Terre are the Loyalty Islands (Ouvéa, Maré, Lifou and Tiga); to the north, the Bélep Archipelago; and to the south, the Isle of Pines and Huon Island. There are also several uninhabited islands to the north of the Loyalty Islands. The area of Grande Terre is 16,750 square kilometres and that of all the islands combined, 19,103 square kilometres. Nouméa, the capital, is located in the south of Grande Terre.

2. According to the 1989 census, the population was 164,173, comprising 73,598 indigenous Melanesians known as Kanaks (44.8 per cent); 55,085 persons of European origin, mainly French (33.6 per cent), of whom 35,000 persons, known as Caldoches, are descendants of the early settlers; 18,936 Wallisians and Tahitians (11.5 per cent); and 16,554 others, mainly Indonesians and Vietnamese (10.1 per cent).

3. Under the Matignon Agreement of 1988, the Territory is divided into three provinces, the South and the North (on Grande Terre) and the Loyalty Islands. Each province has an elected Assembly, which is responsible for local economic development, land reform and cultural affairs. Together, the members of the assemblies constitute the Territorial Congress, which is responsible for the territorial budget and fiscal affairs, infrastructure and primary education. The presidents of the assemblies, along with the President of the Territorial Congress and the French High Commissioner, currently Mr. Alain Christnacht, form the territorial executive. Local government is conducted by 32 municipalities. 1/

4. To safeguard Kanak tradition, there are also eight customary regions, each with its own Consultative Customary Council, as well as a Territory-wide Customary Council.

5. In the French National Assembly, New Caledonia is represented by two popularly elected deputies as well as by one Senator and one Councillor for Economic and Social Affairs. The Territory is represented in the European Parliament. 2/

6. There are two principal political groupings and numerous small parties. The two main groupings are the Rassemblement pour la Calédonie dans la République (RPCR), which favours retaining a relationship with France, and the Front de libération nationale kanake socialiste (FLNKS), a coalition of parties that favour independence from France. The constituents of FLNKS include the Parti de libération kanak (PALIKA), the Parti socialiste calédonien (PSC), the Union calédonienne (UC) and the Union progressiste mélanésienne. 3/

7. Elections were held in 1988. The RPCR controls the Provincial Assembly of the South and, by virtue of its representation in the other two assemblies, half of the 54 seats in the Territorial Congress. RPCR members represent New Caledonia in the French National Assembly and Senate. FLNKS controls the provincial assemblies in the North and in the Loyalty Islands and has 19 seats in the Territorial Congress.

8. The Matignon Agreement (see A/AC.109/1000, paras. 9-14) provides for a self-determination referendum to be held in 1998, following a 10-year period of development during which efforts would be concentrated on effecting more equitable economic distribution among the three provinces and providing education and training that would enable Kanaks to participate equally in the economy and Government of the Territory.

II. POLITICAL DEVELOPMENTS

Meeting of the Committee to Monitor the Matignon Agreement

9. The Committee to Monitor the Matignon Agreement met for the third time on 17 and 18 October 1991, in Paris. The French delegation was headed by Mr. Louis Le Pensec, Minister for Overseas Departments and Territories. FLNKS was represented by an 11-member delegation headed by Mr. Paul Neaoutyine, its President, who is also President of PALIKA, and Mr. François Burck, President of UC. 4/ The 14-member RPCR delegation was led by the party president, Mr. Jacques Lafleur. At the invitation of the French Government, two Kanak leaders who were not signatories to the Agreement, Mr. Nidoish Naisseline of the Libération kanake socialiste (LKS), which is based in the Loyalty Islands, and Mr. Louis Kotra Uregei, Secretary-General of the Union des syndicats des travailleurs kanakes exploités (USTKE), a major labour union, also attended. 5/

10. As at the previous meetings, participants concentrated on developments in the social and economic spheres. Participants agreed with Mr. Le Pensec that, overall, progress was being made but stressed the need for France to make more strenuous efforts to bring about more equitable economic distribution among the three provinces and to provide education and training that would enable Kanaks to participate on an equal footing in the economy and Government of the Territory. 5/

11. In his opening statement, Mr. Le Pensec said that developments over the past three years had vindicated the population of New Caledonia and their elected representatives. Each of the provinces now had its own identity, its own institutions and its own network of services and was becoming deeply involved in the task of promoting economic development and employment. Indeed, since the institutional framework was in place, for the rest of the 10-year period of the Agreement, priorities would be education and training; redistribution of land and economic wealth; social welfare and public housing, both in Nouméa and the interior; and preservation of Kanak culture. The importance the State attached to the latter was demonstrated by the fact that the planned construction of the Jean-Marie Tjibaou Cultural Centre (at an

estimated cost of 320 million French francs) would be under the personal direction of the Chief of State. Other important areas were regional cooperation and relations with the European Community.

12. In an earlier statement, Mr. Le Pensec had stated that the Matignon Agreement had transformed New Caledonia's relationships with other States in the region in a positive way. New Caledonia had become a partner whose views were sought. Leaders from all groups in the Territory that had signed the Matignon Agreement had visited Australia, Fiji, New Zealand, Papua New Guinea and Vanuatu, while leaders from neighbouring States had paid reciprocal visits to the Territory. Mr. Le Pensec supported New Caledonia's desire to be directly associated with France's initiatives in the South Pacific, as shown by the decision of the Territorial Assembly to lend 1.6 million francs to Vanuatu.

13. In her statement of 18 October 1991 to the Committee to Monitor the Matignon Agreement, Prime Minister Edith Cresson surveyed developments in the Territory over the past three years and stressed that the focus in the future would be on economic and social development. The Government's main concern was to assure that no one felt left out and that all shared in the benefits of development.

14. As regards political developments during the year, it was noted in the final document of the 3rd meeting of the Committee to Monitor the Matignon Agreement that the review of electoral rolls and preparation of lists of individuals eligible to vote in the 1998 referendum was continuing with the assistance of teams of magistrates from France. Further teams would visit the Territory in 1994 and 1997 to complete the exercise.

15. It was also noted that the institutional framework had been completed with the establishment of the Economic and Social Committee and the Consultative Committee on Credit. The process of nominating members to the Consultative Customary Council was under way.

III. ECONOMIC CONDITIONS

A. General

16. The basis of New Caledonia's economy is the mining, processing and export of nickel. The mining sector and most land suitable for commercial agriculture were for many years controlled by inhabitants of European origin, while the majority of Kanaks were dependent on subsistence agriculture.

17. To bring Kanaks into the economic mainstream and to ensure a more balanced development of all regions of the Territory, the Matignon Agreement called for the decentralization and regionalization of economic activities, as well as for the launching of regional development programmes tailored to meet the specific needs of each province. Thus, a large proportion of government development funds are currently being channelled to the Northern Province and

to the Loyalty Islands Province, which have Kanak majorities, rather than to the Southern Province where most profit-making economic activities were concentrated.

18. In May 1991, Mr. Le Pensec said that, thanks to various projects which were under way, an economic fabric was emerging in the north and in the Loyalty Islands. With the assistance of the Caledonian Institute for Participation (ICAP), more than 60 projects had been financed in the hotel sector, commerce, small-scale manufacturing, mining, agriculture and industry; other projects in the planning stage included fish processing and the cultivation of aromatic plants and fruit trees.

19. In her statement at the 3rd meeting of the Committee to Monitor the Matignon Agreement, Prime Minister Cresson noted that a first series of contracts for development that had been signed with the State for 1990-1992 was under way, at a total cost of 900 million French francs. Projects included roads, schools, colleges, administrative buildings, medical centres, housing, hotels, electrification, telephone lines and water-distribution systems. A second series of contracts for the period 1993-1997 would be signed at the end of 1992.

B. Trade

20. In 1991, New Caledonia exported 3.268 million tons of goods valued at 45,917 million Communauté financière du Pacifique francs (CFPF). 6/ While the volume of exports was 37 per cent more than in 1990 (2.105 million tons), the value of exports decreased from CFPF 47,000 million to CFPF 46,000 million, mainly due to a steady fall in the world price of nickel. As a result, the already negative balance of trade of the Territory continued to deteriorate during the period, from -CFPF 39,767 million in 1990 to -CFPF 42,881 million in 1991.

21. In 1991, total imports amounted to CFPF 88,798 million, an increase of 2.2 per cent in value as compared to 1990 (CFPF 86,929 million). The Territory's main imports are machines and electrical equipment, transport materials and food products.

22. New Caledonia's main trading partners are France and the other countries of the European Community, followed by Australia, Japan and the United States of America.

Table 1. Balance of trade

(Millions of CFP francs)

	1986	1987	1988	1989	1990	1991
Imports	59 382	63 353	65 395	88 608	86 929	88 798
Exports	23 573	20 653	50 814	77 900	47 031	45 917
Negative trade balance:	-35 809	-42 700	-14 581	-10 708	-39 898	-42 881

Source: Institut territorial de la statistique et des études économiques, Bulletin de Conjoncture, No. 32, fourth quarter 1990, pp. 10.5 and 10.6; and ibid., No. 36, fourth quarter 1991, pp. 10.3 and 10.4.

C. Public finance

23. In 1989, ordinary revenue amounted to approximately CFPF 50 billion and ordinary expenditure to CFPF 47.2 billion. Substantial subsidies from France supplemented local sources of revenue.

D. Agriculture, land tenure and livestock

24. Agriculture plays a relatively minor role in the economy of the Territory, although an estimated 34 per cent of the population, primarily Kanaks, depends on it. The domestic production of maize, wheat, rice, sorghum, yams, fruits and vegetables is usually insufficient to meet the needs of the population, and each year the Territory imports sizeable quantities of cereals and other food products.

25. Land devoted to livestock, mainly on the west coast, amounts to 13 per cent of the total area of Grande Terre. Most of the cattle ranching is controlled by the population of European origin. There are some 120,000 head of cattle. Pigs, goats, sheep and poultry are raised on small farms.

26. Three fourths of the total land area is covered with natural vegetation. Forests are spread over 374,000 hectares, of which only 11 per cent, mostly concentrated in the centre of Grande Terre, is considered suitable for commercial exploitation. A reafforestation programme was reactivated in 1987.

27. The Territory's rural and land development agency, Agence de développement rural et d'aménagement foncier (ADRAF), formed subsequent to the Matignon Agreement to meet the objectives of rural development and, to enhance the role of the Melanesian community, has been involved in a number of land

redistribution projects. According to Mr. Le Pensec, from 1988 to 1991 ADRAF redistributed 62,500 hectares of land, of which 75 per cent went to Kanaks. ADRAF also acquired an additional 11,000 hectares.

E. Fisheries

28. Despite its economic potential, ocean fishing has been of relatively little economic significance for the Territory. However, since 1987 the total annual production of tuna and related species, nearly all exported to Japan, has increased substantially. In 1991, about 2,100 tons of fish valued at CFPF 520 million were exported, although earnings were poor because of low world prices.

29. Over the past few years agreements have been reached with Japanese and United States companies permitting them to fish in the Territory's exclusive economic zone. These ventures have not proved profitable. Japanese boats expected to land only 30 per cent of their allotted 2,225-ton annual quota in 1991, while of the 25 United States ships authorized to fish in the Territory's waters only two actually requested licences and neither of them was reported to have undertaken operations.

30. Aquaculture, especially the raising of shrimp, is beginning to outperform ocean fishing proportionately, with export earnings in 1991 of CFPF 445 million, mostly from sales to Australia.

F. Mining

31. New Caledonia has 28 per cent of the world's deposits of oxidized nickel ore and is the third largest producer of nickel in the world after Canada and the former Union of Soviet Socialist Republics. Its known and estimated reserves of nickel are believed to amount to 50 million tons. In addition, the Territory has deposits of chromium, cobalt, iron, manganese, lead and zinc. With the exception of chromium, whose production in 1990 amounted to 2,777 tons, no systematic exploration of these minerals has been undertaken in recent years.

32. Nickel mining is controlled by France, which has declared nickel to be a strategic mineral. Currently, nickel is mined at several sites along the east and west coasts by the State-controlled Société métallurgique Le Nickel (SLN), as well as by a small number of independent mining companies. The production of nickel ore increased from 41,961 tons in 1990 to 43,452 tons in 1991. Exports amounted to 41,300 tons. The main destinations of nickel exports are Japan and Australia.

33. In April 1990, after a year of negotiations, a regional council of FLNKS bought for US$ 319 million the 85 per cent share of Mr. Lafleur of RPCR in the largest private nickel mine of the Société minière du Pacifique sud, located in the Northern Province of the Territory. The French Government was reported

to have given its assent beforehand to the transaction, which was considered to be a major contribution to the achievement of the objectives enshrined in the Matignon Agreement.

34. Mr. Dominique Strauss-Kahn, Minister-delegate for industry and foreign trade, has been appointed to supervise the sector and to undertake discussions with representatives of the Territory to define common goals for the exploitation of nickel.

G. Transport and communications

35. New Caledonia has one of the best air and road networks in the South Pacific. The international airport located at Tantouta, 53 kilometres from Nouméa, is served by a number of overseas airlines and by Air Calédonie, the local airline. There are regular air links to the Loyalty Islands, to the Isle of Pines and to the Bélep Islands and the Northern Province.

36. Coastal roads circle Grand Terre and several roads cross the interior. Major construction and improvement projects are under way. One of the most significant of these is the construction of a road in the Northern Province linking the east and west coasts.

37. Most goods are shipped through the port of Nouméa, although mineral exports are loaded directly at the mining centres. There is a regular cargo route from Australia and New Zealand and several shipping companies operate services between the Territory and the Far East, the United States and Europe. In addition, over 30 small coastal vessels are engaged in a variety of commercial activities within the Territory. Since 1988, improvements have been made to facilities on the Loyalty Islands.

H. Tourism

38. Tourism is the second most important sector of the economy after nickel mining. To revitalize the sector, which suffered significantly during the turmoil of the 1980s, the French Government has subsidized hotels which would otherwise have had to close and has agreed to provide funds for a large-scale programme of improved tourist facilities. In addition, a major promotion and advertising campaign has been launched to attract visitors once again.

39. In the past few years there has been a steady improvement in tourist arrivals, with the number of visitors averaging 84,000 annually since 1989. The average length of stay in 1991 was 4.5 nights, and hotels operated at about 60 per cent of capacity. Heretofore, most tourism has been confined to the south of Grande Terre. The other provinces are currently trying to encourage the construction of hotels.

40. Thirty-eight cruise ships visited New Caledonia in 1991 and 36,997 passengers disembarked.

Table 2. Number of tourists, 1989-1991

	1989	1990	1991
Japanese	27 358	28 781	25 675
French	21 054	22 638	23 807
Australians	13 974	14 066	14 167
New Zealanders	7 411	9 378	8 908
Others	12 364	12 007	10 967
	82 161	86 870	83 524

Source: Institut territorial de la statistique et des études économiques, Bulletin de Conjoncture, No. 32, fourth quarter 1990, p. 4.5; and ibid., No. 36, fourth quarter 1991, p. 4.4.

IV. SOCIAL AND EDUCATIONAL CONDITIONS

A. Labour

41. Labour relations in New Caledonia are governed by the Code du Travail of 1982, as modified in 1986, which applies to all French Overseas Territories. There is a guaranteed minimum wage and there are a number of labour unions, including USTKE and the Union des syndicats ouvriers et employés de Nouvelle-Calédonie (USOENC).

42. According to the Bulletin de Conjoncture of 1991, unemployment has grown. In 1991, unemployment averaged about 6,250 persons a month, 9.3 per cent more than the previous year and 39.8 per cent more than 1987. Of the total unemployed, 63.3 per cent were in the Southern Province, 31 per cent in the Northern Province and 5.7 per cent in the Loyalty Islands. Over 40 per cent of the unemployed were between the ages of 16 and 25.

43. According to a statement by Mr. Le Pensec on 26 May 1991, over the preceding three and a half years the number of salaried employees in the Territory had increased by more than 25 per cent and by some 75 per cent in the Northern Province and the Loyalty Islands.

44. FLNKS has charged that Kanaks remain underrepresented in public-sector employment. In a note to the French Government in December 1991, FLNKS said that of a total of 231 public officials in certain catogories, only 42 were Kanaks.

B. Public health

45. In 1986, the latest year for which figures are available, there were 226 medical practitioners, 22 dentists and 18 pharmacists in public service in the Territory. During that year, the ratio was one doctor to 460 inhabitants in Nouméa and one to 2,097 outside the capital. In 1988, medical personnel in private practice comprised 99 doctors, 28 dentists and 29 pharmacists. Most of them were based in and around Nouméa.

C. Educational conditions

46. Education in New Caledonia is free and compulsory for children between 6 and 14 years of age and is offered in the French language. Primary education is within the competence of territorial authorities, while secondary education conforms to French standards.

47. Until recently, facilities for secondary education were concentrated in the south and few Kanaks continued beyond the primary level. In 1987, for instance, Kanaks accounted for 56.5 per cent of the primary school population, but only 40 per cent of secondary school students.

48. Information indicates that since 1988 progress has been made in respect of increasing the educational opportunities for Kanaks throughout the Territory. According to data provided by the former Minister of National Education, Mr. Lionel Jospin, whereas in 1987 and 1988 together only 55 posts were created in secondary education, there were 62 new posts in 1989, 54 in 1990 and 67 in 1991. Furthermore, whereas in 1987 there was no programme of supervised study, in 1991 1,700 hours of supervised study were provided. Mr. Jospin also reported that whereas in 1988, of 205 candidates who took the qualifying examination for teaching in primary schools (certificat d'aptitude professionnelle) only 53 passed, in 1991, out of 300 candidates, 220 succeeded. As further evidence of progress, he said that the proportion of students who passed the brevet des collèges had increased from 66 per cent in 1988 to 77.5 per cent in 1990, while the total number of brevets earned, had increased from 1,792 to 2,183. In two years, the increase in the number of brevets awarded has been 51.3 per cent in the Loyalty Islands and 146.5 per cent in the North. The number of Melanesians who earned the baccalauréat was 19 in 1981, while in 1990 it was 99.

49. The construction of three new high schools in the Northern Province is planned; a vocational school at Touho is scheduled to open at the beginning of the 1993 academic year and ground is being broken for a comprehensive high school at Poindimie which is scheduled to be completed in 1994.

Notes

1/ The Europa World Year Book 1992, vol. I, p. 1147.

2/ Ibid., p. 1146.

3/ Ibid., p. 1148.

4/ Le Monde (Paris), 14 December 1990.

5/ La Croix l'Evénement, 12 December 1990.

6/ The local currency of the Territory is the CFP (Communauté financière du Pacifique) franc. One hundred CFP francs equals 5.5 French francs.